Glen Canyon Dam – Adoption of Non-Native Fish Control Program Through 2020



CURRENT STATUS: The Bureau of Reclamation has completed all environmental compliance requirements associated with adoption of a research-based program to control Non-Native Fish in the Colorado River below Glen Canyon Dam from 2012 through 2020.

BACKGROUND: Biological opinions for the operation of Glen Canyon Dam include requirements that Reclamation control non-native fishes that prey on endangered native fish in the Colorado River below Glen Canyon Dam. These Endangered Species Act-based requirements contemplated lethal removal of non-native fishes that prey on native fish in order to benefit the native fish – primarily the endangered humpback chub.

Based on the sacred status of the Colorado River, including particularly the confluence of the Little Colorado River and the Colorado River, the Pueblo of Zuni and other Tribes involved in the Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program expressed concern over the proposed lethal fish removal. In order to address Tribal concerns, in 2010 Reclamation cancelled planned fish removal trips, reinitiated ESA Section 7 consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and began a public process to analyze potential alternatives to address both the concerns of the Tribes and Reclamation's ESA obligations.

Reclamation has conducted extensive government-to-government Tribal consultations and analyses to ensure the non-native fish control actions required under the biological opinion are implemented in a way that respects Tribal perspectives. Reclamation has moved the location of the proposed mechanical removal upstream and away from the Little Colorado River reach (an area many tribes consider sacred), and will test reducing emigration of rainbow trout and brown trout from source populations in Glen and Grand Canyon through removal in areas closer to Lees Ferry. To address the Tribal concerns over the taking of life (prior mechanical removal trips killed the non-native trout), fish that are removed would be kept alive and stocked into waters as sport fish in areas that have approved stocking plans. If live removal proves to be infeasible, Reclamation anticipates fish removed would be euthanized for later beneficial use identified through continued Tribal consultation.